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Senate

The Senate met at 12 noon, and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Today's prayer will be offered by guest Chaplain, Rabbi Stuart Weinblatt.

PRAYER

The guest Chaplain, Rabbi Stuart Weinblatt, of Congregation B'Nai, Potomac, MD, offered the following prayer:

As we gather together in this hallowed Hall and sacred institution, we pray dear God for guidance and wisdom, for temperance and prudence.

May this body's quest for justice be tempered by mercy and compassion.

May those who have been chosen to serve this great Nation be imbued with the sense of awe and humility which will enable them to execute their duties with decency, dignity, and sanctity. May their actions, deliberations, and decisions be made with the recognition that all are created in the image of the Almighty. May they be guided by the ethics and ethos of the treasured teachings and eternal words of wisdom which have inspired people throughout the ages.

In that spirit, we note that this time of year is referred to on the Jewish calendar as Tu B'Shevat, the New Year of the Trees.

Since ancient times, this day, in the dead of winter, serves to remind us of the human responsibility to care for the Earth, affirms the importance of planting trees, and thus asserts the intricate relationship between humanity and the environment in which we live.

And so, may we be inspired by the custom of planting trees this season, and of the concept of recognizing the importance of giving back to the Earth. May we be inspired by the work of the Jewish National Fund and by those who have contributed to this effort which has helped to bring this

message to people throughout this Nation and who have planted trees and forests throughout the land of Israel.

May we learn to plant at all seasons.

May we plant seeds of goodness and kindness, of virtue and benevolence. In so doing, may we sow the seeds of a just and reverent society. May our deeds be like trees—firmly rooted and giving much nourishment and sustenance.

May we be touched by the Jewish tradition's teachings which likens trees to wisdom and life itself; so too may we bring that message to others.

Let us say amen.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, there will be a period for morning business until the hour of 12:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes each. At the hour of 12:30 there will be the swearing in of Senator RON WYDEN of Oregon.

I now ask unanimous consent that immediately following the swearing in, the Senate stand in recess until the hour of 2:15 today in order for the weekly policy conferences to meet.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BURNS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, following the policy conferences, the Senate will resume consideration of the farm bill, in which there will be a cloture vote. I am not certain when, but probably early afternoon. Under the order, the cloture vote is on the Leahy substitute amendment. All Senators have until 12:30 today to file first- and second-degree amendments to that substitute.

We would like to complete action on the farm bill today. It is very important all across America. We have had a real effort to come together in a bipartisan manner. We have not been able to achieve consensus, but I think there is still a lot of bipartisan support for the Leahy substitute. If we need 60 votes, we hope we will have the 60 votes.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ASHCROFT. I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

WELFARE

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, the business of the Senate has been consuming and demanding this year. The debate over the balanced budget amendment and the debate over the achievement of a budget which will protect the fiscal integrity of this country and bring us into balance in the next 7 years has been an important one and it is a necessary one. It has consumed much of our energy and the opportunity of this Senate.

I think it is important for us to understand while this is a task which must compel and will compel our attention, it must not do so to the exclusion of another important agenda that is essential to the progress that the American people sent us here to make. The American people not only sent us here to protect the fiscal health and integrity of the economics of the United States of America, but they expect us

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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